DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 273 782 CE 044 935

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TITLE Literacy for Development: An African Perspective (Notes from a Sabbatical).
PUB DATE Oct 86
NOTE 46p.; Presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (29th, Madison, WI, October 30-November 2, 1986).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; *Developing Nations; Economic Development; Educational Radio; *Literacy Education; Outcomes of Education; Personal Narratives; *Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation
IDENTIFIERS *Africa; Ethiopia; *India; Kenya; Malawi; Tanzania

ABSTRACT

This report contains one man's impressions of the state of adult literacy education in several countries of Africa and in India. The first country reported on is Ethiopia, where signs of a capitalist society were evident in that officially Marxist country, where literacy education was still a priority in the midst of a waning famine. Ethiopia had conducted continuous "campaigns for literacy" that had succeeded despite lack of resources. Next, the planning for a literacy broadcasting system to provide radio support to literacy in Malawi is described. In India, political corruption and official neglect make the progress of literacy education doubtful. However, literacy may come to be inevitable, though the progress is slow. A workshop in Kenya showed that literacy education was progressing slowly, serving 350,000 adults in about 1,300 centers that year (80 percent being women), but that official support from the highest government levels seemed to be waning. Finally, adult literacy programs in several areas of Tanzania are described. The report concludes that literacy is a basic need and a powerful force that will inevitably come to all peoples because it is innately desired by all. (KC)

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# LITERACY FOR DEVELOPMENT: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

## (NOTES FROM A SABBATICAL)

By

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This paper was first submitted in July of 1986 to the Dean, School of Education and to the Dean of Faculties of Indiana University as a report at the end of a sabbatical, under the title, "Adult Literacy and Educational Radio for Development in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and India: Notes from a Sabbatical." In September 1986, the research implications of the sabbatical report were brought out in a short paper presented to a doctoral seminar in the department of Instructional Systems Technology of the School of Education. Again, in mid-October 1986, the main thrusts of the report were shared with a faculty research group in the School of Education, Indiana University. The present paper as now presented to the panel on literacy in Africa, "Literacy Policy: A Means for What End?" at the Twenty-ninth Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Madison, Wisconsin, October 30 - November 2, 1986, is a slightly modified version of the report. The focus on Africa has been sharpened, However, the Indian material has been retained for a comparative view.

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(NOTES FROM A SABBATICAL)

By H.S. Bhola

One can not really stand outside History; and certainly not for ever. Sooner or later, directly or somewhat indirectly, subtly or quite savagely, one is influenced by history in the making. I had for a long time, known this fact at a rational level. But it is not the same thing as experiencing it, emotionally and pragmatically, every time with new poignancy, in the daily mundane acts of existence.

The academic year of 1985-86 was going to be my sabbatical year in India. The research plan as approved by my university looked promising. Starting with New Delhi at the center, I would go East as far as Nagaland (or perhaps into Manipur State); South into Kerala State; West into Gujarat; and North into Panjab. My plans were to study the dynamics of adult literacy policy and performance in India, as the scene changed from the center to state capitals, to district headquarters, to development block offices, and, finally, to literacy centers where literacy teachers taught adult men and women how to read and write. I would also study Indian policy and performance in regard to the utilization of educational technology, particularly educational

radio and distance education, in the delivery of nonformal education and development extension.

But history intervened. In June 1984, the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi ordered the army into Harimandir Saheb, the holiest of the Sikh temples situated in Amritsar, Panjab, to "flush out the Sikh extremists" who were using the temple as a sanctuary. A part of the temple was badly damaged in this operation, and the Sikh psyche deeply wounded. In November 1985, she was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards in retribution for having ordered the assault on the temple. Tragically, the whole Sikh community -- both secular and "fundamentalist" -- was held collectively responsible for the assassination. There were riots nation-wide. Hindu rioters, with the connivance of the government, killed thousands of Sikhs, men, women and children, burning many of them alive in their homes and in the streets. Being a Sikh who still wears a turban, I was glad that I had not proceeded with my earlier research plan. Even in the Spring of 1986, working in the villages as had been earlier planned was out of the question. Bowing to history, I changed my one-year sabbatical into a one-semester sabbatical leave; and then even the one-semester sabbataical had to be divided between India and Africa. The sabbatical turned out to be completely different from what was originally hoped for, but nonetheless it was a rewarding encounter -- of another kind!

Ethiopia: Literacy serves the revolution

The five-month long educational safari described here began with a trip to Ethiopia from December 23, 1985 to January 19,

1986. Unesco, Paris asked me to undertake a mission, in their behalf, to Ethiopia to assist the Ministry of Education to review their experience with the National Literacy Campaign, first launched in July 1979; and to offer them advice in formulating a long-term policy for its continuation and for more effective integration of the post-literacy phase of the campaign with the country's development plans.

I accepted the mission to Ethiopia with a considerable sense of excitement. I had been to Ethiopia before in the early 1970s, as a Unesco official, to advise the Unesco/UNDP Work-Oriented Adult Literacy Pilot Project, then serving Welaita-Sodo, Jima-Agaro, and Chilalo development areas, not too far from the capital city. I had seen something of the realities of Emperor Haile Selassie's Ethiopia. I remembered particularly, being stopped one day in Addis Ababa, in the early morning traffic, and seeing the Emperor stop his car to distribute dollars to his poor subjects who stood dutifully in a queue to receive imperial charity. The Emperor had hoped, perhaps, that with a few Ethiopian dollars to the poor, he would be able to mend the affairs of the state and stem the tide of history. I was anxious to see what the Nationalist Democratic Revolution of 1974 had done to Ethiopia and what socialist Ethiopia was like under Chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam. I was particularly interested to see as to how a poor country like Ethiopia had been able to launch a national literacy campaign that had drawn the admiration of people from all over the world.

What I had read, and what I had learned about literacy for

development in Ethiopia, from talking to those who had been to Ethiopia recently, was quite impressive. The new socialist government had inherited a country with an illiteracy rate of 93 per cent. And yet in a period of less than 6 years, they had achieved 45 per cent literacy. Their political commitment had been strong and unswerving. Their political organization, which was used with great effect in the delivery of literacy services, had been excellent. In their effort to support cultural pluralism, they were offering literacy in 15 nationality languages. The resources necessary for the implementation of the campaign were coming from the peoples themselves. By the end of 1985, the National Literacy Campaign had claimed 18 million participants, out of which 12 million had been certified as literate at the third grade level, and as many as 8.1 million were following post-literacy courses. What else was going on? How were they doing it? I was anxious to see for myself.

Ethiopia was coming out of a severe famine at the time of my visit. Addis Ababa was by no means famished, though there were signs of hunger elsewhere in the land. In a huge parking lot across from Ghion Hotel, one could see long rows of big trucks donated by international aid agencies that would carry food upcountry where the famine was still raging. After I had been in Ethiopia for some days and developed a rapport with of my Ethiopian friends and colleagues, I asked if they knew of the Liveaid concert and whether they had approved of the effort in behalf of Ethiopia. Of course, they knew and, of course, they were grateful. But they wished also that the West would stop supporting the rebels in the North in the war that was killing

their young and bleeding their country to death. Though the war itself was distant from Addis Ababa, there were reminders of it around. One could see, now and then, a truck-full of young people, shouting patriotic slogans, as they were led for army training and later, perhaps, to the war-front. I heard some bystanders express dismay that boys so young were being recruited for sacrifice in the war that did not seem to come to an end.

There were enough signs in Addis Ababa to remind the people that Ethiopia was now a marxist state. There were arches all over the streets that announced Ethiopia's solidarity with proletarian movements around the world. There were huge billboards showing the pictures of Marx, Engles and Lenin. A big cement statue of Lenin stood in the garden in front of the office of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). There was a rather attractive monument to the heroes of the revolution signifying the overthrow of fuedal oppression by peasants and workers.

While there were all these signs of marxism, I did not see many marxists in Addis Ababa from socialist countries. The only Marxists I did see were a couple of Cubans in Harambe Hotel downtown who had come to work on some water development projects. On the road to Shino Town, I saw a billboard announcing the presence of a dairy farm and training center run by Cubans; and another sign marking the road to a cement factory established by East Germans.

In the offices of the Government, one met officials who were friendly and intelligent. Many of them had been trained in the United States and England. Most of them had adopted the

outward mannerisms of marxism. They called each other "Comrade", and wore official khaki or blue safari suits to work. They expressed no doubt about the route the country had taken under the leadership of Chairman Mengistu. But they did not fit the stereotype of the paranoid, conditioned, and insensitive bureaucrat. They talked quite freely about where they may have gone wrong and where ideology may have neglected reality. Some speculated about what Ethiopia would have been, if the Emperor who once was a hero to his people for keeping them free, had initiated land reforms before it was too late.

Formally, Ethiopia is today a marxist state. On September 10, 1984, the formation of the party known as the Workers Party was officially announced. But surely, it is easier to declare a marxist state than it is to establish a marxist society . If one could judge from attendance in the churches on Saint Gabriel´s day, Ethiopians are still a deeply religious people and the Church is strong in marxist Ethiopia. In fact, I learned that after an initial and unsuccessful attempt at suppressing the Church in Ethiopia, the government had decided to wait for a more opportune moment to separate the people from "the opium of the people." I saw two New Year´s days in Ethiopia during my mission: one on December 31, 1985 and another on January 7, 1986. Both were celebrated with gusto, first in the churches and then in the bars and hotels. I kidded a fellow-drinker about drinking Johny Walker -- a capitalist brew, in socialist Ethiopia. He assured me that it was not to support the capitalist system but to show solidarity with the working classes of Scotland!

Out on the streets of Addis Ababa, the young wore tight

jeans. The women who had it, flaunted it. The cinema hall across from my first hotel downtown was showing "Purple Rain".

Such was the context in which I found myself studying literacy for development in Ethiopia. It was a touching realization that inspite of famines and wars, life must go on. And it was a most heartening realization that literacy work can go on too, in war and famine, if it has become a part of the life of a nation.

The give and take

In a professional sense my mission to Ethiopia was most rewarding; and it came close to being in the nature of "mutual consultation." It was not just a matter of an outside expert landing, looking, evaluating and instructing the local decision-maker what to do. It turned out to be an opportunity for learning from each other, of thinking, reflecting and inventing together. The Ministry of Education had established a Task Force in the Ministry of Education which, during my three-week mission, had several meetings with me and independently on their own. The program was reviewed, problems were identified, issues formulated, and possible strategies of action were planned and discussed. My task was to bring to the discussion my particular understanding of the situation and suggest solutions based on my experiences in other countries in Africa and Asia who were engaged in implementing massive national literacy programs and campaigns and had had problems somewhat similar to Ethiopia.

An insider´s look at the Ethiopian National Literacy Campaign was most fascinating. What I had failed to pick up from

my readings on Ethiopia was the realization that Ethiopia was not merely implementing literacy by using the campaign strategy, but that they were implementing development itself by the campaign strategy. Since the NDR of 1974, many development programs and projects had been handled by the campaign method, and many more would be so handled within the framework of the government's Ten-Year Perspective Plan (TYPP), 1984-94. Ethiopia had understood that the campaign method was the best method to bring up the latent energies of the people and to mobilize and motivate them to apply themselves to national tasks. The commitment to the campaign method and to the literacy campaign went to the highest levels of leadership -- to Chairman Mengistu himself. He had made inspiring speeches on literacy and exhorted people to join the campaign to learn or to teach; he had awarded flags to those communities of Ethiopia that had eradicated illiteracy by hundred percent; and he had himself taught literacy classes to show his commitment to a literate Ethiopia. Both in policy statements and in actions, he showed that neither culture nor technology could change without a literate community. Those who have reservations about the campaign strategy for literacy promotion, need to give a second look to the possibilities not only to "campaigning for literacy" but also to "campaigning for development". (This realization helped me to understand also why the Government of Ethiopia had locally published 3,000 copies of my Unesco, 1984 book, Campaigning for literacy, and distributed them among their development workers.)

I did, however, notice a phenomenon that can be best

described as "campaign fatigue." There had been too many Zemechas (campaigns) in the country since it started on the long and hard road to socialist reconstruction. The National Literacy Campaign of 1979, itself had been going on, year after year, round after round, and was now in its 13th round. This is not to suggest, though, that the campaign strategy is, therefore, bankrupt and should be discarded in favor of "manageable" programs and projects. However, it does mean that political will that initially gave birth to the campaign needs to be systematically sustained over long periods of time. One mobilization, at the beginning of a campaign, is not enough. Many mobilizations will be required in the life of one campaign.

I learned also that lack of coordination between and among the various ministries of the government is not the disease only of non-socialist states. There was not only the problem of lack of coordination but also of lack of communication. The various departments of the Ministry of Education itself were not always aware of what was being done in the department of adult education and why.

There were also problems of conceptual clarity with serious practical consequences. The principal actors within the campaign organization themselves were apologetic about "adult literacy to have swallowed adult education" in Ethiopia. They did not understand that there was nothing to be sorry for and that it was indeed according to the government policy intent. The government in its various policy prouncements had made it quite clear that in Ethiopia adult literacy would be centeral to the processes of changing both culture and technology; that the policy in Ethiopia

was adult education with literacy.

Learning things first-hand

It was amazing how much the Ethiopians had been able to accomplish with so little of material resources. It was not only scarce material resources, the whole enterprise had lacked professionalization and had been run by sheer common sense. Those in charge had learned on the job by making their mistakes. They did not have much of professional training or qualifications.

One often reads about the political organization of the Ethiopian people since the revolution. A sympathetic observer can not help being greatly impressed. On the other hand, the unsympathetic observer may feel frightened that there should have been such an effective and comprehensive mobilization of the people through Peasants Associations (P.A.'s) and Urban Dwellers Associations (U.D.A.'s). My visits to Kebele 05 and Kefitegna 10 around Addis Ababa, and to Lege Doki village in Metarovi district halped me to understand the role that P.A.'s and U.D.A.'s had played in the mobilization of the people and their resources and in the delivery of literacy programs. Without this political mobilization, the great successes in the literacy campaign would have been impossible. Thanks to the P.A.'s and the U.D.A.'s, the literacy campaign had indeed become a people's campaign.

One other thing that struck me during my visits to the field -- to literacy centers, reading rooms, to P.A.'s, U.D.A.'s, district education offices, and regional education offices -- were the statistics on the literacy campaign, most beautifully displayed on well-designed charts and posters. At the apex, in

the Ministry of Education office in Addis Ababa, there was a whole exhibition hall full of charts and poster, showing the quantitative progress of education in the country. This preoccupation with statistics was good, I thought. The visitor was able to get a concrete idea of the progress of the literacy campaign as well as of the developments in the field of education in general. More importantly, these statistics were used, as far as I could tell, in making day to day decisions about setting targets, recruiting teachers and conducting implementation.

I visited the Awaraja Pedagogical Center (APC) in Debub Zene. The APC´s are much talked about institutions in Ethiopia. There are 97 APC´s functioning at the moment and more are planned so as to have one well-equipped APC in each of the 106 Awarajas in the country. One can find district level media and resource centers elsewhere in the world that are much better equipped and have done greater work for the communities than has been done by the APC´s in Ethiopia. What makes APC´s so impressive is their contribution to education in Ethiopia is the special historical context of the country. These APC´s were invented as institutions that would provide professional support to schools and literacy centers which had no where else to look. The APC´s brought together professional and pedagogical resources of the peoples and communities together and then made them available to schools and learning centers. It was amazing what the APC´s had done with pieces of wood, tin sheets, and old newspapers to produce useful learning and teaching aids for the learners. I did notice, however, that the APC´s had not done much for out-of-

school education and that their contribution to adult literacy and post-literacy still remains to be fulfilled.

Productivity is an important theme of Ethiopian development in general and of literacy for development efforts in particular. Also, the crucial role of science and technology in improving productivity is well understood. The Burayu Basic Technology Center of appropriate technology is an important part of this overall scheme. Located at a distance of a few kilometers outside Addis Ababa, the Burayu center is not an impressive facility. The first look at the center may indeed be a letdown of sorts. One finds three sheds built on a large piece of land. There are two professional workers guiding some half a dozen others. The demonstration solar cooker lies in front of one of the sheds. It works. In another shed, women are making mud bricks, using a hand-made press. Behind this shed, there are a few construction workers building a home, using these mud bricks. Ethiopians, since times immemorial, have build their huts with wood and have cut lot of wood to build fences around their homes. They have also used wood as fuel to cook food. As a result, the forest cover has been reduced from 40 per cent to a mere 3 per cent during this century. This simply can not continue. The Burayu center is promoting the use of mud bricks to build homes, using the absolute minimum of wood.

A related project at the Burayu center is of fuel-efficient and smokeless ovens. This type of oven reduces consumption of wood by as much as two-thirds as they also save the eyes of women whose duty it is to prepare food for their families. If both these innovations, of mud-brick homes and fuel-

efficient ovens, became universally accepted in Ethiopia, there would have been a quiet revolution in the ecology and the economy of Ethiopia. That is the great potential of Burayu. However, Burayu is still a hope and has a long way to go before its influence can reach all the people of Ethiopia.

A reference to educational radio in Ethiopia is appropriate at this point. Ethiopia is the only developing country that I know of that has a separate system of educational broadcasting, with its own separate studios and its own separate transmitting tower. These facilities, which incidently were established twenty years ago during the time of the Emperor with assistance from USAID, have been maintained well and used well by the new socialist regime. Eleven 1-Kw transmitting stations all over the country broadcast educational programs produced in Addis Ababa. With these facilities, it is claimed, the signal can be received in 90 per cent of the country. The educational radio produces programs in four nationality languages. Since most people understand more than one language, this covers all nationality languages speakers. While I was there, the head of the educational broadcasting department had returned from Makalle after having inaugurated a separate studio for the Tigray region. The plan is to decentralize educational broadcasting so that each radio station can respond to the local needs of communities and regions. A new 10-Kw transmitter is planned to be added soon.

There were two occasions during my visit when I was able to be close to people rather than simply watch them from a distance. On January 8, 1986, I had the opportunity of addressing all the

education directors of Addis Ababa region. It was a big group of maybe some 150 or more people who sat dutifully in rows and heard me talk about formal education, alternative formal education, nonformal education and informal education. I informed them that some of what they called nonformal education was not nonformal at all but alternative formal education -- another version of formal education. There were some questions later from the floor about why US was doing this or that, questions I did not feel obliged to answer. Other questions, fortunately, were focussed on educational issues. There was considerable interest in the work of Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire to whom I had referred in my presentation. Most of them were not familier with their work, mainly because they could neither acquire such materials personally nor through a library. In one way, they were a typical group of school principals but their complacency had been shattered by the new political realities in which they had been forced to play new roles. Teachers and headmasters, it should be noted, are frequently put in leadership positions in P.A.'s and U.D.A.'s and have come to acquire important political responsibilities. Thus, the agents of educational change and of social change in post-revolutionary Ethiopia are the same one group of people.

Another encounter with the people, if it can be so called, came during my visit to the Community Skills Training Center (CSTC), Lege Doki village, Shino Town in the district of Metarovi, some four-hour drive from Addis Ababa by landrover. The CSTC's have become central to policies and plans for rural development in Ethiopia. They are meant to serve as centers of

dissemination of science and technology to communities, train farmers to be more productive in agriculture as well as introduce new vocational skills within communities to raise their standards of living. There are already 408 CSTC´s in the country, and the hope is to have one CSTC in each of the 588 Weredas of Ethiopia. Since the first CSTC appeared on the scene in 1974, some 40,000 farmers and artisans have been trained in rural development skills in these centers. If the CSTC in the Metarovi district was typical, lot more will have to be done before CSTC´s can play the role expected from them. For the time being, the skills taught to learners in the CSTC´s are traditional and can not serve as vehicals of transition to individual or societal modernity. The group of farmers who came to the CSTC to greet me were quiet and glum. I have no idea of what was passing through their minds as they sat dutifully on benches away from the high table.

Some advice given to Ethiopian colleagues

What was my advice to my Ethiopian colleagues at the end of this mission in behalf of Unesco? It is not possible within the scope of this short report to include the full text of the set of recommendations made to my Ethiopian colleagues. A longer, more formal report will be prepared for publication in the near future. Only some general remarks are being included hereunder to provide a flavor of the suggestions made.

I suggested first of all that they avail of the deep interest of the Chairman in adult literacy ; and should have him re-launch the campaign at its mid-point. It was important that

the campaign fatigue that had set in, was systematically dissipated and the interest of the party and the peoples -- and most importantly of the bureaucracy -- was rekindled. The Ministry of Education (as other Ministries of the Government of Ethiopia) have established internal forums wherein policy makers are supposed to come together to review policies and performance and to learn about each others work. Such forums should be used more effectively for internal communication and coordination. It was important that the role of adult literacy was understood, first in relation to adult education, and then, in relation to the overall development effort of the country. Without conceptual clarity, it would be difficult to build commitments in behalf of literacy and post-literacy among the team in the Ministry of Education itself.

The second theme I suggested was that of institution building and the professionalization of the enterprise of adult education and adult literacy. Ethiopia needs an adult education training institute of some sort where a variety of personnel could be trained for certificates, diplomas and degrees in adult education. Ethioipia needs a full-fledged department of distance education. Until such time that such institutions have been established, Ethiopia needs to establish permanent training workshops for writers of materials for new readers, and in the area of curriculum development and evaluation of impact.

Ethiopia needs to multiply and strengthen its Community Skills Training Centers. They need to introduce in these CSTC´s, skills and technologies that would provide the <u>transition</u>

from the old traditional skills to the new modern skills of high technology. Most importanly, Ethiopia needs a genuine community level institution such as the proposed Basic Development Education Centers (BDEC's). At the present, the only institution at the grassroot where an "educational encounter" can take place between the educational agent and learners is the literacy class or the reading room. The work of the various agencies of education and extension remains fragmented since there is no integrated unified point of delivery for services.

I also suggested to the Government that, in addition to the variety of developmental materials for farmers and workers already available, they should produce a citizen's Almanac. This should not be seen as something ephemeral and should be revised only every three or five years. It should include all kinds of useful information on history, politics, government, geography, land and people; long-term weather cycles and other agricultural information for farmers; information on union laws for workers; information on nutrition and health for mothers; and so on and so on. The point is that such an almanac should become the secular companion to the Holy Book.

I pointed to the decision makers the need to face the contradiction of teaching literacy in fifteen nationality languages but using only Amharic as the language of instruction in schools. Finally, I did note the fact that the Ethiopian National Literacy Campaign was using a method of teaching literacy which was rather traditional, based as it was on the alphabetical method and lot of drill work. While there had been comments about the deadening effect of drill and the consequent

heavy dropout rates from literacy classes, overall the method had been quite successful. People still came to classes and millions of them did learn to read. One can not quarrel with success, but I did suggest that they should experiment with the psycho-social method associated with Paulo Freire. If the results were dramatically better, they should perhaps change. After all, they now had the time and skill to revise their teaching materials.

What are the literate Ethiopians doing with their literacy skills and what will they do with post-literacy? Those who work with illiterates in Ethiopia tell you that people feel rewarded simply because they can read and write. They want materials on which they can practice their new reading skills and they want to acquire more "knowledge." They now have an inner frontier opened to them which, they know in the heart of their hearts, will open an "outer frontier" sooner or later. They can not single-handedly change their own history, bring rain, make their fields spill gold, or make the famine go away. But they are ready to be lead in the reconstruction of a better future. They now have greater social, economic, political, educational and cultural potential.

Radio support for literacy in Malawi

From Ethiopia, I flew down to Malawi to participate in a two-week workshop (January 16-29, 1986) that would prepare a group of Malawian literacy workers and broadcasters to provide radio support to their soon to be launched nation-wide functional

literacy program. This workshop was organized on the initiative of the National Center for Literacy and Adult Education of the Ministry of Community Services, jointly with the Malawian Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), and with the sponsorship of the German Foundation for International Development, Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany.

Malawi´s interest in the universalization of literacy is comparatively recent. An experimental functional literacy project had been initiated with Unesco/UNDP sponsorship in 1981. By December 1985, when the experimental phase ended no more than 35,000 to 40,000 adults may have been covered.

During the years of the experimental program, but not solely because of the program, the Government has come to the realization that further development must be based on scientific agriculture and modern industry, both of which will require a literate population. Literacy was not necessarily meant to be an instrument of democratization, but it certainly was to be used as a tool of modernization. From July 1986, the Government would launch a nation-wide literacy program that would make 2 million adults literate in five years. The effort would require a tremendous level of political commitment and material resources to match, to open the required 80,000 learning centers spread over some 22,020 villages.

To launch such a program, the people of Malawi had to be informed and mobilized. Adult men and women had to be persuaded to come to classes to learn, and those who could teach had to be persuaded to volunteer as teachers. Those who would offer to teach had to be trained and their motivations sustained over long

periods of time. The teaching had to be made functional so that adults could put what they learned to immediate use in their lives and in the development of their communities. It was quite obvious that radio could play an imporant part in the fulfilment of these objectives.

An analysis of the current programming of MBC showed that they were already broadcasting on most of the topics of interest to literacy workers. The MBC was willing to strengthen existing programs and launch new ones. They were willing to reorganize time slots and provide further time slots if needed. It was a matter of planning and doing. It was a most happy situation.

The two-week training workshop held at the Grand Beach Hotel, Salima, a small and sleepy town on Lake Malawi was the first of its kind in Malawi. It turned out to be a most successful experience. We had the best of resources available. We had with us Dr. M. Deltgen of the Voice of Germany who, earlier in the 1960s, had spent some years in Malawi helping in the institutional development of the MBC. We had with us Henry Chirwa of the MBC, and a group of most innovative and committed program producers also from the MBC. Some of these program producers had become national celebrities, their voices were recongnized by people all over the country, and they were literally mobbed by people in small villages around Salima where we went with them to tape programs.

The 22 participants of the training workshop came from many development departments, ministries and agencies -- the ministries of agriculture, health, and information; Malawi

Correspondence College, Malawi Young Poineers and others. They were divided in three production teams. In the mornings, we had plenary sessions or did our script writing and planning. In the afternoons and early evenings, the teams were in the villages observing, interviewing and recording folk songs and skits put up by the learners in literacy centers. Three series of programs were planned. The first program in each of the three series was fully written and produced. One program series would talk about the important role of literacy in development thereby hoping to mobilize the people to participate in the program both as learners and teachers and to contribute to its success in other ways. Another program series would provide in-service training to literacy instructors and keep them motivated by providing them a peer network on the air. A third program series would provide the learners and their teachers <u>functional</u> knowledge of agriculture, health, nutrition and other development topics dealt with in the primers and follow-up books. As we left Malawi on January 31, 1986, we had the pleasure of playing the taped programs for the Honorable Minister and the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Community Services. They were most pleased and impressed. I like to think that there was important meta-learning from this whole experience for everyone involved -- the lesson being this: "Malawi can do it!". Malawi can indeed launch a good enough program of radio support to literacy without any additional resources. It would be tough, but it could be done. With very little by way of additional resources of equipment and personnel, some excellent work can be done.

That makes me reflect upon the usefulness of seminars,

workshops and other training events in the developing world offered by bilateral and multilateral organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF and, of course, the German Foundation for International Development, Bonn, which was responsible for this particular workshop. Training is training, is training. It can create awareness and it can leave behind skills. But it cannot change bureaucratic structures, nor affect political cultures. Training inputs can turn out to be strategic, if the local decision makers and power holder would want to create opportunities for those skills to be used. It is too early to see what effect the Salima workshop would ultimately have on the provision of radio support to literacy in Malawi.

Literacy for development in India: Some steps forward, some steps backward

I had had to abandon my plans to do field work in India because of political disturbances. Now I was going to spend my research time and effort during February 6-28, 1986 and March 17 to April 12, 1986 in collecting, reading and analysing policy documents relating to adult education and adult literacy for development. Most of it would come from the center. I would visit one State capital (that is, Chandigarh) and one district education office (that is, in Amritsar).

While waiting in New Delhi, I came to have what has to be called a lucky break! As soon as I had gotten over my jetlag, I called Anil Bordia, known to literacy workers all over the world,

and who is currently the additional secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Human Resources Development in New Delhi.

In addition to a welcome to India, I got from Anil Bordia something much more precious: an invitation to sit on the national committee that was in the process of reviewing the national policy on adult education to be presented to the Indian Parliament later in May 1986. The first policy review of education in the history of independent India had been conducted in 1968. In 1985, Rajiv Gandhi who had recently succeeded his mother, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, as the Prime Minister of India, ordered another national review of educational policy.

The educational policy review of 1985 had been ordered in an environment of urgency. Rajiv Gandhi was talking of making India ready for the Twenty-first Century. The educational system with its present objectives and structure was not going to be the vehicle for taking India forward. The system was producing good enough scientists, business managers and bureaucrats to keep the system going, but that was not going to contribute to the social transformation that has been the goal of India ever since independence in 1947. A total overhaul of the curriculum was necessary from the elementary grades to the university. There had to be innovation in both content and methodology of sciences as well as social sciences.

At the same time, India was witnessing a frightening resurgence of what in India are characterized as fissiparous tendencies. That is, communalism, regionalism, casteism was in

full sway and the Indian people seemed to be forgetting that they should think of themselves as being Indians first. This meant that in the new educational policy there had to be emphasis on national integration. A common core of curriculum for primary schools for the whole of India was one policy theme being discussed. It was also obvious to policy makers that adults who were out of school or had been bypassed by it altogether had also to have lessons in national integration as well as in science and technology to contribute to productivity.

The educational policy review process had been started with the publication by the Ministry of Education of the Government of India of The Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective, August 1985, a document so self-critical that the opposition parties and the press were disappointed. They were left with nothing to say about the mess that Indian education was in! The policy review was supposed to work as follows. This initial document would serve as a springboard for discussion of the educational problems first in the localities. Reports of findings and policy suggestions from the localities would go to the districts. District level educators would gather to discuss educational problems from the perspective of districts and will send their findings and policy suggestions to the state headquarters. State capitals will send their findings and policy suggestions to the center. At the center, there were attempts made to obtain feedback from some additional constituencies. For example, exhaustive analysis had been made of comments on The Challenge of Education made by the press; and leaders in education, business and politics had been invited to offer analyses.

All this material had been synthesized for discussion by nine separate committees. One of those several committees was going to discuss adult education and adult literacy policy and it was this committee that I had been invited by Anil Bordia to join.

I had, in the months previous to undertaking the Sabbatical leave research and travel, worked systematically and extensively on a review of the National Adult Literacy Program (NAEP), renamed Adult Literacy Program (AEP) by Mrs. Gandhi. Being on this policy review committee was, however, a unique experience and I was able to learn things that I was not aware of before.

The committee met for two days on February 11-12, 1986 and discussions lasted for long hours. The members of the committee were all national level leaders of adult education in India. They were most analytical in their remarks and passionate in defence of the positions they took. It was now clear to me that the NAEP had been in greater trouble than I had imagined. Some members of the committee went so far as to say that "the NAEP had never gotten off the ground" and that "Mrs. Gandhi had almost succeeded in her attempt at infanticide" as she tried to kill the NAEP in its infancy, simply because the program had been started by her political rival and predecessor, Morarji Desai. Some in the committee, all adult educators themselves, seemed to have lost faith in adult literacy particularly. They were so carried away by their own breast-beating that they seemed to have forgotten the successes of the NAEP howsoever meagre, and the fact that those successes had come <u>inspite of</u> the discouragement from the government at the center. Also, they did not seem to realize

that they were applying much more stringent criteria to the performance of adult literacy than to other programs of education and extension, for instance, elementary education. For instance, wastage and stagnation in elementary education in India is of such proportions that, of the one hundred that start in the first grade of school, only thirty-three per cent or less pass the fifth grade. No one ever dares to close elementary schools for that level of performance but everyone is ready to kill the adult literacy program which, in the first place, is delivered with much cooler commitments, much lesser resources and without the level of institutional support that is available to formal education.

According to the draft policy under discussion, there would be a new calendar for the eradication of illiteracy in India. Under the new schedule, 90 million people in the so-called productive age of 15-35 years would be made literate during the years 1985-90. Some 45 million would be covered under the various literacy programs already in operation. But another 45 million would have to be covered under the new "mass program for functional literacy" to be conducted mainly by school and university students. Some 3.5 million students (and out-of-school youth and workers in factories) would be mobilized every year. They would be given specially designed literacy kits to teach adults in an each-one-teach-one situation or in small groups of two, three or more, if they could bring such groups together. Students are expected to provide some 150 hours of instruction.

The new policy requires that all the components of the program be strengthened and that there be integration of all activities directed towards human resources development. To make such integration a reality, Village Continuing Education Centers (VCEC's) will be established in every village to be used as the common point for the delivery of all development services in the country. When fully implemented, 550,000 VCEC's would have been established in 434 districts of the country. Their mission will be revolutionary: integrate the teaching of the 3-R's with functionality and awareness; and cover the total population of the young and adults. The total cost of the program is envisaged to be Rs. 20,000 Crores (equal to 16,500 million US dollars). The new educational policy has since been submitted to the parliament and has been approved.

What the report proposes for adult literacy and adult education in India can be done. India has the money and it has the professional capacity. The only thing that is lacking is the political will. The interesting thing to note, however, is that while the government and the privileged classes may not work too hard to promote literacy, they dare not now come out in the open against literacy. They can not really stop it. Mrs. Indira Gandhi was hell-bent to kill the NAEP because it had been initiated by her political rival. She starved it of funds, and gave it a bad name as she tried to strangulate it. But she could not kill it.

As I had the opportunity of telling the "Orientation Seminar of Directors of State Resource Centers on Mass Program of Functional Literacy through Youth" while addressing them on April

4, 1986, you cannot have a mass program without the participation of the masses. Indeed, it may not be possible to implement the mass program of functional literacy, guided by half-convinced, and half-hearted administrators in the universities and departments of education, and carried on the shoulders of middle-class youth and their spirit of voluntarism. A coalition of all political parties had to come about and they all had to commit themselves to the task. There had to be some management of incentive structures (some gentle social coersion, if you will) to have students pay their dues to the society by teaching literacy to illiterate adults.

But I am anticipating a little bit. At the end of the educational policy review meeting on adult education, I was invited by the Director of the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), New Delhi (who was also a member of the adult education review committee) to talk to his faculty on the problems of planning.

The policy review that we have been referring to was, to its great merit, concerned not only with substance of policy but also with the strategy of policy implementation. The single most important theme here was that of decentralization of planning at the district level. I spoke to the faculty group on "planning for implementation" as distinguished from "blueprint planning." The planning for implementation, I suggested, had to be conducted in the dialectical mode, involving a process of ordering and relating, hypothesizing and then making corrections in strategy based on existential experience in the real situation to which planning was related. This meant working with those whose lives

we were seeking to touch through our planning and this meant planning as a continuous process that sought to put a frame on the flux that is reality. The implication was that decentralization of planning would not help much, if it did not at the same time become planning for implementation.

The faculty presentation generated quite a bit of interest and I was invited by the Director of NIEPA to offer a full-fledged two-day seminar at the institute for a select group of planners and decision-makers to be invited from all over India. For me personally, this was more than an honor for it gave me an opportunity to present an update on my own theoretical work on planning of change, known as the configurational theory of innovation diffusion, planned change and development (or simply the CLER Model). I had first published this work in India in 1966, and there would be many in the group who would not be familiar with my initial model and its testing and development over the years. The seminar took place in NIEPA, situated on the campus of the National Institute of Education (NIE), New Delhi, during April 7-8, 1986. The seminar was well-received and important decisions were made about a follow-up on the seminar.

What were my thoughts as I left India in the middle of April, 1986? I left with a mixture of fear and hope. I was in some ways afraid for India. The social tensions between religious communities, between regions, between the haves and the have-nots were serious and were translating into violence which simply did not seem to subside. The demographic explosion had not only created an "economy of scarcity" but also a "morality of scarcity". All was okay, if it succeeded. Everything was on

sale -- influence, degrees, jobs, justice and the heritage of holy icons and statues, for which people would have died a few decades ago. On the other hand, the leadership seemed to be part of the problem, not of the solution. They spoke in pious words, but acted corruptly. They did not seem to see farther than their noses. My hope was that one day the present leaders, or new leaders who take over from them, will have a vision which they will be able to share with the people and together with the people they will be able to create a society that is prosperous, moral, secular and humane.

I was, similarly, full of both fear and hope for adult literacy work in India. My fear was that the mass program of functional literacy may turn out to be neither a mass program nor a functional one and may end up being yet another fraud on the people. It might simply be kept on the books so that politicians could boast about it now and then. My hope was that the program may fail and yet literacy would somehow continue. The Indian people were waking up to the fact that education (literacy in case of adults) is a tool without which they simply can not hope to escape from their poverty, their powerlessness and all their other social predicaments. Literacy, however slow the progress, had come to be inevitable. That gave me a sense of hope.

Literacy in Kenya: Hastening very slowly

An interesting opportunity offered itself that during March 3-14, 1986 would take me to Njoro, Kenya to participate in a

national workshop (with two guest participants from nextdoor Tanzania) on design and production of materials for distance education programs and courses. I was most grateful for this possibility since, later in summer, I was scheduled to teach an advanced seminar in the School of Education of Indiana University on the topic of "Distance Education as an Instance of Instructional Systems Technology." Njoro would give me useful experience to take back to Bloomington.

There were four clear subgroups among the approximately 25 participants. One group would produce materials for an on-going program for the training of literacy teachers who are already at work in Kenya´s national literacy program. There are some 4,000 such literacy instructors who are at work full-time after a very short training. They are now being trained through a distance education course that would make them effective agents of education and development. A second group worked on materials for the in-service training of untrained teachers in primary schools. In its effort to universalize primary education, Kenya has had to employ thousands of untrained primary school teachers. Distance education was the only way to go if these teachers had to be provided any pedagogical training at all. A third group came from the African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF) that, among other things, delivers training at a distance to health workers in all parts of Africa. A fourth group came from Kenya´s Cooperative College and from Kenya´s Trade Union movement both of whom have important distance education programs. So a lot is happening in Kenya in the area of adult literacy and adult education. More importantly, some innovative technologies and

mechanisms for the delivery of educational services are being tried.

Information on the current status of the literacy program in Kenya came second-hand, from those who were attending the Njoro workshop. Those from the adult education department were still quoting 1983-84 figures because more recent statistics were not available. The program as far as it could be surmized was that year serving as many as 350,000 adults in about 1,300 centers where adults came three times a week to learn reading and writing and functional skills. Few of them were men, 80 per cent of the participants being females.

Since its inception, the adult literacy program had enrolled 2 million adults, half of whom would have actually learned to read and write. The total eradication of illiteracy was thus far away since the country had started with more than 5 million illiterate adults at Independence and may have added some more to that figure since then. Qualitatively, the program had been a great success. The neo-literates had become special people. There was not a single case where their kids were not in school. Many have moved into leadership positions in their communities. Both their personal health and personal confidence are better than before.

All was not good news. The President had not made any speeches recently about literacy. He had not done anything special for the literacy program by way of funding. Indeed the department was desperately in need of funds to buy paper to print the various materials that would be used in the teaching of adults and the training of their teachers.

Seminar cum study tour on the Tanzanian approach towards post-literacy (April 16-30, 1986)

Tanzania is considered to be the Mecca of literacy workers in Africa. To implement the Arusha Declaration of 1967, that had sought socialism and self-reliance for the Tanzanian people, a literate population was essential. "First we must educate adults," President Nyerere had dared to say. Children could wait. It was adult literacy that was central to the development plans of Tanzania. A national literacy campaign had been launched in 1971. By 1985, the illiteracy rates had been brought down from 67 per cent in 1967, to 15 per cent in 1985. According to the new directive of the party, illiteracy must be eradicated from Tanzania by the end of June 1987 and all efforts redirected towards post-literacy programs which are already serving thousands of adults through a variety of programs from reading rooms to folk development colleges.

In Zimbabwe further down South, Prime Minister Mugabe had made adult literacy central to his "second revolution" after the first phase of the war of liberation had been won against Ian Smith's white minority regime of erstwhile Rhodesia. The nation's 2.5 million illiterate and semi-literate adults had to be made literate through a national literacy campaign that would last from July 1983 to June 1988. When the literacy campaign was formally launched in Zimbabwe, there were already some 55,000 adults in literacy classes. By the end of the year 1985, there

were around 378,000 adults in literacy classes and 50,000 of them were ready for post-literacy classes and related activities.

The decion makers in Zimbabwe wanted to develop post-literacy programs that would be built on tested experiences elsewhere in Africa. A study visit to Tanzania, a sister socialist country, with long history of association with Zimbabwe from pre-liberation days, was an obvious place to go on a study visit.

The German Foundation for International Development (DSE), Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany, that has worked in this part of Africa seeking to promote dialog and discussion in the area of adult basic education, agreed to sponsor the visit of around fifteen senior officials from the ministries of education, community development and womens´ affairs, agriculture, health, labor, etc. and from voluntary agencies active in the field of adult literacy.

I had had the privilege of having worked in the area of literacy in both Tanzania and Zimbabwe and was invited to be with the Zimbabwe team as a resource person. I would be with the visitors as they observed and discussed things through, to answer questions they may have; and sometimes to suggest questions that they should have, as they sough to transfer ideas and innovations from on context to another.

I was last in Tanzania in June of 1982 when I had come to Arusha to direct a national workshop (there were two international guests at that workshop from Mozambique) on the topic of planning and designing post-literacy programs. I was now returning after about four years. And how much Tanzania had

changed in those four years!

The new context, the new realities

Tanzania, once again, made me think deeply of the ravages of history on individuals and societies. Here was Tanzania, at one level, trying to contend with its own history -- the decisions taken by its leadership in regard to its own political economy. At another level, Tanzania was trying to cope with history being made around it, in Africa and in the world.

The war fought by Tanzania in behalf of the Ugandan people had been a moral victory but terribly bad for the economic health of the nation. The socialist experiment had well-nigh failed. Nyerere had succeeded in teaching people their rights, but not their obligations and duties. Productivity had gone tumbling down in most sectors of the economy. The instruments of production and the infrastructure of communication and roads was in disrepair. Tourist hotels were in bad shape. Inflation was high. The dollar was around 17 shillings officially and from 170 to 200 shillings in the black market.

One wondered how people survived! Yet I did not see people starving. And the kinds of people I came in touch with were not even desperate. They complained a lot, but then paid 50 shillings for a bottle of beer, bottle after bottle. The problems with the economy had not made people inhospitable. Wherever we went as a team, we were entertained lavishly. (I have not seen that kind of hospitality in India or for that matter in Europe.) It would be reckless to conduct a class analysis on this basis! But it can be safely said that some

areas of Tanzania (the Moshi and Arusha regions, for instance) are quite prosperous and some classes in Tanzania (that is, the party officials and government bureaucracy) have learned how to survive and are indeed doing quite well.

The will to fight has remained among the common people and among the leadership. Thus, there was hope! Party officials claimed that Ujaama was still the aim of the government. Government officials and party bosses still poured out tirades against the IMF for trying to force Tanzania to devalue their currency and browbeating them into ruination. There were still protests (somewhat cautious, I must say) against America for their bombing of Libyia. Yet most people were pleased that the new President Ali Hassan Mwinyi was less doctrinnaire than President Nyerere who had resigned just last November 1985. They were happy to see that economic managers as well as labor was being asked to produce and make profit or to close out and quit. They were glad that the new government seemed to tolerate more private ownership and initiative. Things were frightfully expensive, but at least they were there.

The political economy of a country can not but have serious effects on education and extension. But it is amazing to see how well the adult literacy program of Tanzania had survived. An obvious explanation is that the program for adult literacy, if it suffered, it suffered proportionately. It was not simply cut because there were other "more important and more urgent" things to do. Nyerere´s statutory provision that 10 per cent of the national educational budget must always go to adult education had helped the literacy campaign to survive and, in some areas, even

to flourish. While we were there in Tanzania, plans were being made to eradicate illiteracy by 1987. The newest surveys showed that 15 per cent of the population, some 2.3 million in absolute numbers had still remained illiterate. A census was soon to be taken to find out who those illiterates were and where they lived. As has been the case before, the party cadre will mobilize and the teachers will teach. The unpaid primary school teacher would continue to play the crucial role. In curriculum content, the old triangular relationship among literacy, political education and functionality will be retained.

In and around the city of peace

The Seminar cum Study Tour to Tanzania began with an introductory session on the history, politics and pedagogy of adult literacy and post-literacy work in Tanzania by the Director of Adult Education in the Ministry of Education, Ndugu Z.J. Mpogolo and his colleages. The Kivukoni Ideological College that we visited next was in good shape. The teachers representing their particular subject specialization (political science, economics, history, socialist defence, accounting, etc., ect.) gave excellent and internally consistent presentations on what they were trying to teach. It is here that in answer to a question by a visiting Zimbabwean, we were told that the Ujaama philosophy and strategy were alive and well; and any doubts about its success were being planted by unfriendly, reactionary, mostly capitalist regimes.

At the Kibaha Folk Development College (FDC) which also serves as the training center for the staff of all other fifty or

more FDC's, the visitors were impressed with both the idea of the FDC and its implementation. They thought that their own Education for Production centers back home could serve as surrogates for such institutions. The team leader from Zimbabwe, Miss Barre, and the other four women in the group were most interested in the role of women in Tanzanian adult literacy and development. They were gratified to note that there were women in the management and instructional structure of the Kibaha FDC and that there were women students studying how to repair tractors -- skills earlier researved for men only.

There were visits to the Institute of Adult Education and the Institute of Correspondence Education. There was a visit to Radio Tanzania which, over the years, has rendered excellent service to literacy and post-literacy work in the country.

At the field level, there was much to see around Dar-Es-Salaam in terms of organized learner groups engaged in post-literacy work. The group was invited to see post-literacy classes, reading rooms, and workers' education groups.

The visit to Mwanza-- The city on Lake Victoria

The study tour could not have been complete without a visit to Mwanza, a city on the Southern tip of Lake Victoria in Northern Tanzania. This is where the Unesco/UNDP Work-Oriented Adult Literacy Pilot Project had begun in 1968 and which is in every sense of the term the mother of most literacy work in Tanzania. I had worked on the Unesco Project as a training and methodology expert for two years in 1968-70. The visit was quite nostalgic for me personally.

The Government had not closed the field office of the Unesco/UNDP project (and its successor project) when the technical assistance phase of work was over in 1976. The office was renamed the National Literacy Center and became the technical wing of the directorate of adult education at the center in Dar-Es-Salaam. During our visit, it was engaged in two important projects: a national evaluation of the impact of adult literacy on development in Tanzania supported in part by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA); and the production and distribution of a Zonal newspaper for new literate adults.

The study group also had the opportunity to visit post-literacy classes and rural libraries in the rural communities around Mwanza. It was clear from these visits that if people are committed, then lot can be done with very little. It was also clear that the question, "What will the poor do with their literacy, if there is no use of it in the community?" is quite absurd. Even when there are no discrete events to show how literacy may have changed their lives, lives are changed in most significant ways.

On the evening of April 24, 1986, I was invited to speak to the Lions' Club of Mwanza. I told the group about the important work Tanzania had done in adult literacy and post literacy which was the reason why so many international groups of literacy and development workers came to visit. It was the first time any one had told them of such important work being done in Tanzania. They were happy in the realization that they had over the years provided some assistance to literacy work without realizing its significance.

The Moshi region was so different

The Moshi region of Tanzania is different. It is lush and green, and it is prosperous. For some quirk of history and culture and tribal socialization, yet to be explained, it is full of energetic people. They are known for their entrepreneurial skills. Even a brief visit in their midst was enough to let the visitor know that it was different -- from Das-Es-Salaam, from Mwanza region quite a bit, and even from Arusha, the region contiguous to Moshi. The hospitality that the group received from the people of Moshi confirmed the first impressions that Moshi was well off. That they were ahead of the nation both in primary and adult education may have something to do with it.

The Regional Commissioner (the Governor in old British terms) of Moshi was a sophisticated, urbane, bright and articulate man who knew quite a bit about what was happening to education and development in the region and was ready to listen. He quoted a wise old Bantu saying: The eye of the visitor is bigger than your own. In other words, the outsider sees things that you yourself stop seeing. The visitors did not, however, had much to tell him that he did not know before. His own eyes were big enough.

In the foothills of Kilimanjaro: Visit to the Arusha region

Arusha is one of the largest of the regions in Tanzania and it is the home of the Maru and the Masai. One of the most touching moments of the trip to Arusha was the visit to a cluster of Masai villages where literacy classes were going on. It had been raining the previous day and night and the place was not

accesssible except on landrovers with four-wheel drive. A valley opened up before us in the shape of God´s own saucer. At one place on the edge of this saucer-like valley, a group of men and women had gathered using the side of the hill as if in a university lecture theatre. Men and women were together -- in separate rows of course, women in front, men behind them. They differed in ages from the very old in their sixties and seventies to adolescent boys and girls. Their cattle grazed in the valley beyond, while they were learning to read and write in Kiswahili. "What will they do with the 3-R´s? I am sure, they would have been surprised at the question. They were becoming literate because it is the right thing to do. It is the ticket for interaction with others, that they meet in the market, on the bus, and in the boma. What could they do without literacy in a world which is not an isolated Masai world anymore? There has been too much knocking on the door and they have had to open the door to the outside.

As I reflect

I was further reinforced in the idea that in reconstruction of present societies and in the invention of new futures whether western or non-western, literacy has to play a central role. As it is conceptualized all over the world today, development is impossible without literacy. To fulfil even the basic needs of peoples all over the world, we need more production and for that production we need technology -- traditional, appropriate and high-tech. To enable farmers, workers and other producers to use technology we need universal literacy.

But while, it is perfectly sensible to have such a utilitarian conceptualization of literacy, it is unwise to stop there. Economic production is not the only role for literacy, it is much more potent. And the only route to literacy promotion is not the economic route. There are many other routes to literacy promotion and use. Literacy will have to be promoted in "the special living context" of each society. The justifications may be cultural, religious, political, social or economic.

Another thing I learned was that there always was a justification for literacy in every community and society. If nothing else it would open for each individual an "inner frontier" to enable him or her to become the contemporary of every one else alive in this world today.

I also came reinforced in my earlier conviction that literacy is inevitable in this world. It is the destiny of the human species. The choice is not between "literacy" or "no literacy", but between "now" and "later". The challenge today is to make the inevitable immediate in the special context of each society. Everywhere I went, the time for literacy was now.

Literacy policy -- A means to what ends?

Paulo Freire said it well: Literacy is a political act. Thus, ends of literacy are always political, though politics would differ from one society to another.

It is conceivable, that literacy is used by the elite for the cooptation of the masses in the furtherance of their own ideological and technological ends. South Africa could be cited as an example of such abuse of literacy.

But, thankfully, there are only a few situations like South Africa in the world. To characterize literacy as "dispossession of speech" or as a tool of exploitation of the masses, we will have to assume that state is always anti-people and leadership always corrupt. Such an assumption should not be made because that would take the role of all leadership out of all human history.

It can be said also that while literacy may not be doing any evil, it is not doing any good either; and in the process scarce resources of poor nations are being wasted. The example of Tanzania is often cited as a country that became 85 per cent literate as a result of a 10-year national literacy campaign but went down-hill economically at the same time.

We know, of course, that literacy can not make rain, nor can it ensure excess to foreign markets or loans and grants from donor nations. But literacy may have reduced the depth of the hurt in Tanzania. We need to learn to do policy analysis in the conditional tense and ask: What would have happended, if Tanzania (or for that matter Ethiopia) had not invested in literacy and acquired the levels of literacy that they did.

And, we should know also that while the ranking of Tanzania among nations in terms of per capita income is extremely low, its ranking in terms of infant mortality rates has improved by some forty notches during the last ten years or more. Literacy of Tanzanian mothers is supposed to have done the trick.

Literacy, I am convinced, is a fail-safe investment. If nothing else, it creates a secular system of social organization which people then use for many social, political and economic ends.

At the individual level, literacy is "potential added." Literacy enables an individual to learn more. It makes praxis more possible. It opens inner frontiers and puts pressures on outer frontiers because it does, in the short run, create creative discontent, and, in the long run, perhaps liberation.

It is by teaching literacy that we create literate environments. People discover uses of literacy once they have become literate.

Finally, it is useful to ask the question in the negative form: Can we bring modernization (of the most elementary form) or democrtization (of the most rudimentary kind) without literacy? The answer is a resounding "NO."

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